

Σ SUMMARY BRIEF OF 1947 FARM LABOR PROBLEMS  
PRESENTED BY THE STATES

by  
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Reports indicate that reconversion of the nation's labor force was virtually completed by the end of the first year of peace. This reflects the ability of the American worker to make necessary adjustments from wartime to peacetime employment in the short span of one year. Your summary of the 1946 operations bear out the conference discussion outlook one year ago, namely: (1) that the farm labor supply would be tight, especially the first six months, notwithstanding a substantial increase in the total labor market; (2) that the last six months of 1946 would show greater flexibility and a considerable increase in the farm labor supply; (3) that in order to insure maximum needed crop production the importation of foreign agricultural workers was necessary and expedient. In accordance with need, plans were made for the importation of foreign agricultural workers.

You will recall this morning that Colonel Buie stated that approximately 65,000 foreign agricultural workers were employed at peak in 1946, compared to about 90,000 in 1945. In addition about 20,000 POWs were employed during the spring and early summer of 1946 (principally in the Intermountain States), compared to approximately 125,000 at peak in 1945.

Looking back briefly at the 1946 operations - although encountering a tight unpredictable domestic labor market, due to reconversion and adjustment from wartime to peacetime, a decreased number of imported agricultural workers and the loss of POWs except for about one-sixth the 1945 supply and these for only a relatively short time, we accomplished the task assigned of assisting the American farmer to procure an adequate labor force to produce and harvest crops in aggregate volume the greatest in the history of our country. Your contribution as a member of the Farm Labor Supply program team was invaluable, and you may point with pride to a job satisfactorily performed.

Your outlook report on the availability of farm labor for the 1947 crop year radiates greater optimism than one year ago, but at the same time you indicate a need for approximately the same number of imported workers utilized in 1946. The number of imported agricultural workers and their period of employment in this country is contingent on need and Congressional authorization and appropriation. Colonel Buie indicated this morning that approximately 30,000 foreign workers were being carried over this winter and that monies now available would provide for the importation of about 25,000 additional workers.

Without further "gum beating" I will brief the major problems presented in your outlook relative to farm labor during 1947:

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1. Production

a. Agricultural Goals - Suggested goals based on estimated requirements for another year of production at near-record levels. Goals suggest adjustments<sup>call</sup> for an increase in sugar which is short in this and other countries. Acreage decreases suggested in many crops. By and large crops requiring large amounts of hand labor indicate very slight decreases. Suggested goals make some allowance for the possibility of less favorable weather conditions and labor yields. Farmers must analyze critically farm plant capacity, markets, and prices.

b. Production of Agricultural Equipment - dependent on the early settlement of labor-management disputes in industry due to unprecedented need for basic farm machinery, repair parts, and the production of labor saving machinery.

c. Manpower - large drains on agricultural workers anticipated if and when materials are made available for highway and building construction, since large sums of monies are available for expenditure on this type of projects.

The maximum utilization of the productive resources in agriculture is dependent on incentives and a reasonable assurance of markets, continuous maximum employment and purchasing power.

2. Efficient Utilization of the agricultural labor force through better management practices - job training - adequate supervision - training in use of available equipment - providing incentives for improved methods and use of improved labor saving devices - development of a well rounded organized program to improve (1) working and living conditions, (2) safety measures, (3) employer-worker relations, and (4) to carry out the full employment concept.

3. Housing - continues to be a bottleneck - war period developed housing for "solo" male workers - need now for family type housing - private and other for both year-round and seasonal workers. Trend indicates farmers desire to house own workers, but lack of material is bottleneck. Need for the development of adequate plans for worker housing. Education process at the grass roots plus aids from federal, state, and local levels of all agencies concerned.

Federally operated labor supply centers must of necessity remain in operation until such time as they are no longer needed. In addition provision should be made for establishing stop-over facilities which are needed in existing patterns of the migration of agricultural workers.

4. Wages - Agricultural wages now at record level - trend indicates wages will continue somewhat on same level and will not tend to decrease at the same rate as commodity prices. Wages can and should be made more attractive through incentives, perquisites, bonuses, better working and living conditions. Greater consideration should be given to compensation insurance for protection of the employer and worker.



5. Health Services - This program should include preventive measures, medical, nursing, and child care. We are cognizant that greater productivity and stability are the resultant forces of a healthful worker, enabling him to increase his earnings, thereby giving greater security to himself and family. This type of program requires education, the cooperation and participation of all agencies, groups, and individuals concerned.

To strengthen the structure of the American economy will require promoting welfare, health and security of the family and the individual.

6. Research - To provide for current and continuous analysis of farm labor problems - develop and improve reporting systems - exchange ideas and reports with other agencies.

7. International relations. Relations with our Canadian, Mexican, and West Indian neighbors have been excellent. Improve and exchange ideas for betterment of the agricultural workers and employer - valuable contributions made. Relations must be basically year to year, maintained currently and continuous.

8. Supply and Demand for Farm Labor. As previously stated, it is anticipated that the labor market will improve and become more flexible during 1947. This indication makes it mandatory that we intensify mobilization of all available labor sources within (1) the local area, (2) the state and between states. Utilization of free moving migrants - this movement is contingent on mobility and established patterns. Greater effort must be expanded in directing this flow along established patterns and at the same time establish new patterns of movement. When this source is found inadequate we should turn to interstate transported workers. When the above mentioned sources have been exhausted and the need for additional labor is existent, then only can we request imported workers.

Let us examine briefly what the worker and the employer want.

Worker

1. Good working and living conditions.
2. Continuous and stabilized employment providing some degree of security.
3. Wages and earnings that provide for adequate standard of living.
4. Adequate housing and community services, availability of medical care, schools, etc.

Employer

1. Assurance of an adequate number of workers for periods of need.
2. Dependability and stability in workers.
3. To provide working and living conditions.
4. To provide: a. employment at wage rates that insure adequate standards of living - b. availability of local services, school, medical care, etc.



Worker

5. Mutual understanding with employer regarding rates of pay, crop conditions, etc. - conducive to good management practices resulting in good worker-employer relations.

Employer

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Based on past experience, there is need for a permanent agency to assist agricultural producers procure an adequate labor force to produce and harvest their crops and at the same time assist workers in finding employment. The matching of need for workers with available workers and at the same time assisting the employer and worker in expediting solutions for the other problems mentioned will require an agency whose objective is "service" to employer and worker.

In addition to servicing producers and workers on problems mentioned above, plans must be perfected for disseminating current and continuous information relative to labor, area of need, crop conditions, type of operation, time of need, length of employment period, wages, working and living conditions, housing and other pertinent data to workers in areas of surplus; advise workers upon confirmation of need, and other pertinent information.

9. Cooperation - The degree of success in the farm labor program is contingent on the full cooperation of all agencies, federal, state, and local - farm organizations, farm groups, farmers, and all persons concerned with the program.